

Synopsis for Wei Hai Wei, China, 1895-1949

Mission: The postal history of Wei Hai Wei (WHW) and the island of Liu Kung Tau (LKT) for the period 1895-1949 is shown in this exhibit.

Treatment: The exhibit starts with forerunners before the first Japanese Occupation in 1895-98 and ends at the formation of the Peoples Republic of China in October 1949. Grouped by different post offices, yet sometimes operating in parallel, and its markings and/or usages, the exhibit is presented in chronological order within the chapters. A chapter has been included under the British PO for the correspondence of the High Commissioner of WHW, Sir James Stewart Lockhart, with his daughter, plus other covers that were addressed to him. Chapters for special historical events, like the Boxer Rebellion, Chinese Labour Corps, both Japanese Occupation were also included, closing with the Communist taking over after WWII and ending with the formation of the Peoples Republic of China. This is a well-balanced exhibit covering every time period of WHW's postal history and history, with in-depth examples shown for each period. The examples shown are selected for its rarity and its significance to postal history and history.

Importance: In a political sense, WHW was the most important stronghold of Britain in Northern China and only second to Hong Kong for all of China.

In a philatelic sense, its postal history included many "China's one-of". For example, the only Courier Post in China, the Chinese Labour Corps of WWI, the only Chinese city that has been invaded and occupied by the Japanese 'twice' in its history, i.e. its post office operations. Then the importance of its stellar British PO operations from 1899 to 1930, when the British lease ended. The operations of the WHW British PO was again, second only to Hong Kong PO in importance for the British in China. The Trans-Siberian Railroad link was through Wei Hai Wei and examples of 1903 usages showing the start of this important service link from China.

Shown in this exhibit for the first time, the findings and proof of how the Kuomintang (KMT) blocked mail from WHW from reaching outside in 1945 from Sept to late Nov, as it was occupied by the communist after the Japanese capitulation and was never in control by the KMT in Peking.

This is the first such exhibit that span this long-time period for WHW and at a coverage of 9-frames.

Knowledge, Research and Personal Studies: The 'new discoveries' in this exhibit show the amount of personal studies by the exhibitor. The main reference cited (below), its copyrights for the next edition and use of material, had been transferred to the exhibitor by the two authors Goldsmith and Goodwyn (past RPS London president, past Keeper of the Royal Collection) in a letter acknowledging this by RPS London in 2004 from Michael Sefi, then Chairman of RPS London Publication Committee (View letter at this link: http://www.geocities.ws/phsoch/RPSL_letter.jpg). The records, particularly for the Chinese POs at WHW/LKT and first Japanese Invasion and Occupation 1895-98, many have been extended by the exhibitor and many new records added by these new and other discoveries.

The exhibitor has been surveying WHW and LKT postal history items for the past 25+ years. For example, Goldsmith and Goodwyn (G&G) recorded and shown only 2 items from the First Japanese Occupation period 1896-98. The exhibitor has in his collection for this category 63 covers/cards (18 covers/items are shown in exhibit) of a total record of 78 items. This record did not include those of the pre-occupation or invasion period (pre-1896), the 5 covers shown in this exhibit has not been recorded anywhere, even in Japan.

The exhibitor was the first presenter at the *2008 International Conference on the Chinese Labour Corp during the Great War* at Weihai, China. The conference was partly induced by the exhibitor, who at the *2006 International Conference on the history and culture of the British Concession in China during the late Qing Dynasty*, which was also held in Weihai, brought up and presented the topic of Chinese Labour Corps and its importance to WHW. Exhibitor's presentations were published later in *Collection of Essays* after each Conference. The first article on the topic of Chinese Labour Corps written by the exhibitor was in 1996 in *Hong Kong's Stamp World Magazine*.

Difficulty of Acquisition, Rarity: Statement of rarity based on the exhibitor's own research/survey and/or from other published sources are stated at the bottom of each of the items shown. The exhibitor is the first to admit that several of the 'only recorded' WHW items are not shown, as all of these have not been offered for sale in at least the past 25 plus years.

In 2006, the *Stewart Lockhart Museum* had graciously agreed to sell all 99 covers from their collection to the exhibitor of the correspondence between WHW's High Commissioner (1902-1927) *Sir James Stewart Lockhart* and her daughter (17 covers with philatelic or historical importance are shown in exhibit).

As an example of the degree of coverage of this exhibit, Pearson/Webb (1994) rarity rating for the 2 British PO boxed registration markings for Liu Kung Tau and Wei Hai Wei were listed as "under 15 recorded". In each case, 6 of these markings on covers are shown in this exhibit.

Items of Significance: Already stated, rarity ratings will be a statement at the bottom of an item. There are many earliest or latest recorded or known items in this exhibit, as such, this exhibit cannot be duplicated.

- Ch 1. Forerunners. *Philo McGiffin's* 1885 cover and *Otto Kuhl's* 1888 cover are the earliest items relating to or originating from WHW. Previously the earliest item relating to WHW were from the First Japanese Occupation period 1896 Jun 2. Before these discoveries, 1880's cover from WHW was thought not to exist.

- Ch 2. Japanese Invasion period, all 5 items are new discoveries. Before these discoveries, the only recorded items were during the Japanese occupation period with an earliest record date (ERD) of 1896 Jun 2 by Stephen Yen, while Peter Padget's ERD was 1896 Jul 22. It was thought that there was no mail to and from WHW have existed for the Invasion period.
- Ch 4. Forerunners BPO. All 3 covers in these section, 1898 Jun 8 to HMS Narcissus at WHW, 1898 Jun 23 PS card to Shanghai via Chefoo and 1898 Jul 1 incoming from UK to Colonel Lewis cover at WHW, are new discoveries. This was a time period that was before WHW's British PO had started. All 3 covers eclipsed the earliest recorded cover by G & G of 1898 Dec 18.
- Ch 5. Courier Post. The only Courier Post service in China. Important forerunner cover showing the Courier Post's operator *Cornabe and Company* was in operation in Chefoo as early as 1886.
- Ch 9. Transition between 2 markings. The 3 items in this chapter without any WHW/LKT arrivals are significant. For some unexplained reason, the marking in use, LKT small CDS, was rarely recorded used for the years between 1906-07, before the new marking, the LKT large CDS was in use from 1907. An observation by the exhibitor and shown by these incoming items.
- Ch 17. Royal Navy (pre-war). This is the largest showing of mail from the Royal Navy in WHW documenting its pre-war activities in northern China.
- Ch 19. Stewart Lockhart Correspondence. The covers written by *Stewart Lockhart* to his daughter were the only ones recorded and the intact collection was acquired by the exhibitor in 2006 from the *Stewart Lockhart Museum*. Lockhart was the highest ranking British official put in charge of WHW for 25 of its 32-year lease by China to UK. Many are philatelically significant item.
- Ch 20 and Ch 22. Chinese PO small oval markings; IPO Tieprints. The first official Chinese PO marking at WHW with a total of 11 recorded. 5 are in this exhibit with 3 in Ch 20 and 2 are placed in Ch 22 as these have IPO Tieprints.
- Ch 21. Chinese PO large oval markings. Stephen Yen had distinguished 5 different sizes of this marking in all different size for a usage record of 12 months. The exhibitor is in the opinion that these rubber markings swell due to the solvent in the ink distorting the final strike on covers. Of the 12 recorded, 3 are shown.
- Ch 24. Chinese PO, WHW double ring CDS. 18 covers/card with this marking is shown with less than 50 covers recorded. This was probably the most important and widely recorded used marking as the Boxer Rebellion brought much traffic and foreign military personnel to WHW during its period of use. It also showed foreign mail from the Chinese PO had to have combination franking. This transitioned into the abolishment of additional foreign franking by 1902 Jan 1 as shown by this marking's covers.
- Ch 28. Chinese Labour Corps (CLC). The Chinese involvement in WWI is shown, where discoveries are still just coming out after 100 years. Already mentioned above is the exhibitor's involvement in promoting this knowledge, since first writing about its postal history in 1996 and presenting 2 papers in international conference in 2006 and 2008 at WHW. The exhibitor's presentations were published in both conferences' publication, *The Collection of Essays*, after these conferences. The exhibitor has been surveying and collecting postal history of CLC for the past 25+ years and the collection is the most extensive known. The exhibitor is the first person to systematically and logically classify the categories according to its usages. Published article included: *Postal History illustrating History: the case of Chinese Labour Corps* in *Asian Philately*, the regional publication of RPS London in China, 2010. Exhibitor initiated a campaign to have Canada Post issues a CLC in Canada stamp issued.
- Ch 32. Japanese Occupation (second). Goodwyn has only records of 2 such covers for this period. 9 are shown. Its rarity related to the fact that the Japanese was restricting and blocking mail from WHW plus the fact that the population of WHW were deliberately reduced by the Japanese occupiers.
- Ch 34. Liberated Area Post (1945). The 9 covers (total recorded is 15) mailed from WHW between 1945 Sept and Oct while every cover arrived in Tientsin on Nov 22 was not a coincidence. It showed the KMT was blocking mail from Communist occupied WHW. The 2 covers with small part of the paper still attached on front, which was the "returned/road-blocked" message is only 2 of 3 recorded. The exhibit is showing this new observation and proof for the first time.
- Ch 34. Liberated Area Post (1946-9). 9 out of 10 covers (exhibitor's survey), including the small size military usage covers that transited or addressed to WHW are shown. Due to the fact that the KMT was blocking Communist mail in and out of WHW, any items from this period are rare and even fewer survived. This is the largest showing ever. This time period has never been shown before in an exhibit or mentioned in any philatelic articles.

Condition: Chinese cover are notorious for the less than ideal condition, given its paper quality and exposure to heat and humidity and rough handling. Covers/cards with "best possible condition" simply do not exist. Shown items are selected for its philatelic or historical importance and rarity over its conditions.

Reference: (most important) *The Crown Colony of Wei Hai Wei*, Michael Goodsmith; Charles Goodwyn; RPS London, 1985.

- *The Postal Markings of China*, Peter Padget, China Philatelic Society, London, 1978.
- 1994 Updated Scarcity Guide by Patrick Pearson, *The Philatelic and Postal History of Hong Kong and the treaty Ports of China and Japan*, F.W. Webb, RPS London, 1961.
- *Shandong and Wei Hai Wei, provincial postal history series #1*, Stephen Yen, self-published in Chinese, Hong Kong, 2005.